
American Embassy Newsletter for American Citizens – Volume 3: September, 2006

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1. Welcome to Peter Kaestner, our new Consul General

The U.S. Embassy New Delhi welcomes Peter Kaestner, our new Consul General. In his new position as Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs, Peter will oversee the U.S. Government's consular operations at the Embassy in New Delhi, as well as our consulates in Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta. This is not Peter's first time in India, however. He attended the American International School in New Delhi in 1967-68, and also served his first overseas tour with the State Department as a vice consul in New Delhi in 1981-82. Before joining the Foreign Service, Peter was a Peace Corps volunteer working as a science teacher in Zaire (now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo). In addition to India and various assignments with the State Department in Washington, Peter's other overseas Foreign Service assignments have included Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Colombia, Malaysia, Namibia, Guatemala, Brazil and, most recently, as Consul General in Cairo, Egypt.

Peter is married to Kimberly Kaestner and has two daughters, Katherine and Laurel. Both attend the American Embassy School, where Peter serves on the Board of Governors.

Peter is not all work and no play. Peter is a well-known bird-watcher, and is presently ranked fourth in the world in number of species seen in his life. In 1989, he discovered a new species of bird that was named in his honor as *Grallaria kaestneri*.

2. 2006 Federal Elections.

This is your last chance to request your absentee ballot in order to vote in the midterm U.S. Federal Elections scheduled for Tuesday, November 7, 2006. Every seat in the U.S. House of Representatives will be at stake, as well as one-third of the seats in the U.S. Senate. There are many important state and local races as well. The rules for voters vary state by state. Information is available on the Embassy website at http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/voter_registration.html. Confused? Contact the American Citizen Services Unit at 2419-8000, or write to acsnd@state.gov.

For those of you who will be receiving absentee ballots in the upcoming months, don't forget that the Embassy will mail those ballots back to the United States for you. Voting mail is the only type of mail that we send on behalf of private American citizens, so take advantage of the service!

Make sure your vote counts. Do not procrastinate. Order your absentee ballot today!

3. Introduction of New E-Passport.

On December 30, 2005 the U.S. Department of State began issuing the first-ever U.S. Electronic Passports. The passports are issued on a pilot basis in the form of diplomatic and official E-Passports. Upon successful completion of the pilot, the Department of States plans to deploy electronic tourist passports worldwide. The U.S. anticipates having all 17 domestic passport agencies issuing E-Passports by the end of 2006.

The proposed U.S. Electronic Passport is similar to a regular passport with the addition of a small contactless integrated circuit (computer chip) embedded in the back cover. The chip will securely store the same data visually displayed on the photo page of the passport, and will additionally include a digital photograph. The inclusion of the digital photograph will enable biometric comparison through the use of facial recognition technology at international borders. The U.S. "E-Passport" will also have a new look, incorporating additional anti-fraud and security features.

Don't worry if your current passport does not include the computer chip. Passports without chips will still be valid for the full extent of their specified validity period.

4. Evacuations and Other Crises.

Many Americans overseas watched with anxiety as American citizens were evacuated from Lebanon during the recent war. Mass evacuation of Americans from a site of danger is an extremely complicated enterprise. The most important component in executing an evacuation is information, primarily through our warden network.

Although there currently are no circumstances at this time which we foresee could lead to an evacuation of American citizens from India, it is important that you keep in touch with the Embassy by ensuring that your registration information is up to date. We need correct information in order to send our "warden messages" to you via e-mail, and also possibly to call you if a serious emergency arises.

The key factor in executing a successful evacuation is managing information. We communicate with you in emergencies either directly via e-mail or telephone, or through the "warden" in your zone. If you would like to know the name and contact information for your warden, please write to acsnd@state.gov, or call the American Citizen Services Unit at 2419-8000. If you know American citizens who are not registered, please encourage them to do so. The link to our on-line registration system appears on our embassy website at <http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov> (look for "Registering Your Presence in India", or click on "U.S. Citizen Services" and select registration from the menu).

5. Demographics of Americans Living in the New Delhi Consular District.

We estimate that there are around 13,000 American citizens living in the New Delhi consular district (which includes Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and the country of Bhutan). We estimate that only 20-25% of Americans living here actually register with the U.S. Embassy. This figure increases significantly during times of security concerns or instability.

We have divided the New Delhi consular district into around 40 "warden zones" based on geography and population. Some areas with small populations of American citizens, such as the states of Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan, are treated as a single zone. Other locations, such as Delhi, are divided into many zones because there are so many American citizens living in the city and nearby areas. In fact, there are so many American citizens living in the Delhi metro area that we have divided the area into 20 "warden zones." Within the city of Delhi, the most popular "zones" for American citizens are the Vasant Vihar zone and the Hauz Khas/Panchsheel

Park/Saket/S.D.A. zone. The fastest growing zones are Gurgaon and Noida, suburbs of Delhi that are at the forefront of India's IT revolution.

Based on persons who come to the Embassy to renew or replace their passports, we estimate that around 80% of the American citizens in the New Delhi consular district are of Indian descent.

6. Terrorism Avoidance.

Recent acts of terrorism in India have been a cause for concern and the Embassy's Regional Security Office would like to provide the following guidelines to help you from becoming a victim of terrorism:

- Let someone know about movements around the city and travel plans. Keep that person informed if you change your plans.
- Avoid predictable times and routes of travel and report any suspicious activity to local police, and the U.S. embassy or consulate.
- Keep an eye out for suspicious abandoned packages or briefcases. Report them to the police or other authorities and leave the area promptly.
- Be sure of the identity of visitors before opening the door of your hotel room or residence. Don't meet strangers at unknown or remote locations.
- Refuse unexpected packages. Formulate a plan of action for what you will do if a bomb explodes or there is gunfire near your location.

Check your vehicle in the morning before you leave for work and in the evening before you return home. A quick check of the undercarriage and wheel wells of the vehicle will go along way in letting terrorist know that you take security seriously. If you find suspicious device on your vehicle immediately evacuate the area, instruct others to do the same and contact the local police. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Know what is normal in the areas your frequent and what are not. Trust your instincts, if it feels bad, chances are that it is bad.

7. The American Roadshow to Jaipur.

Various officials of the U.S. Embassy will be visiting Jaipur, Rajasthan on September 20 and 21 as part of the "American Roadshow: America Comes to Jaipur." Although this program is aimed primarily at Indian citizens, American citizens may also be interested in certain components of the "roadshow" which will showcase American-Indian ties in culture, education, politics, business, etc.

One part of the "roadshow" that may of particular event to American citizens will take place at in the Banquet Hall of Hotel Man Singh from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 20 when a consular officer from the Embassy will be available to answer any questions you have about the consular services we provide at the U.S. Embassy: namely, services we provide to American citizens, and non-immigrant and visa services we provide to Indian citizens.

As part of the roadshow, Abhinet (a Chandigarh-based theater group) will stage Arthur Miller's play "The Price" at Rangayan Theater, Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur at 7:00 pm. on Wednesday September 20. Americans can pick up free passes for the play at the Banquet Hall of Hotel Man Singh anytime during the day on Wednesday September 20.

8. ACS Location & Hours and Upcoming Holidays

Our hours: The American Citizen Services Unit is open to the public from Monday to Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon, and from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. We are available outside of these hours for emergency services. To contact us, call (011) 2419-8000, ext. 4249 or 8562 or 4040 or 4032. You can also e-mail us at acsnd@state.gov.

Upcoming Indian and American holidays on which the Embassy will be closed are October 2 (Dussehra/Mahatma Ghandi's birthday), October 9 (Columbus Day), October 25 (Idu'l Fitr), November 10 (Veteran's Day), November 25 (Thanksgiving Day) and December 25 (Christmas Day). The Embassy is always available for emergency services for American citizens.

If you believe you may have missed a recent "warden message" sent to American citizens in India, all recent warden messages issued by the Embassy are available on the Embassy website at http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/warden_information.html.
